Minutes of the meeting of the
FINANCE COMMITTEE
held on Monday 21st March 2022 at 7:00pm
at the Rochford Day Centre, 33a Back Lane, Rochford

Councillors present: Chairman S May, Mrs L Dalby, R Gardner & Mrs M Weir

F 22/30 Receive apologies for absence:
Apologies were received from Cllr R Patient.

F 22/31 Declarations of any:
a) Disclosable Pecuniary Interest;
b) Other Pecuniary Interest; or
c) Non-Pecuniary Interest
on any matter on the agenda for 21st March 2022:
No interests were declared.

F 22/32 Public Forum:
No members of the public were present.

F 22/33 Approve Minutes of the meeting held on the 6th December 2021 and to approve the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting:
It was **resolved** that the minutes from the meeting held on 6th December 2021 were approved as a correct record and Members agreed to the destruction of the notes in respect of that meeting.

F 22/34 Action Update List - March 2022:
22/34.1 The Clerk would need to talk to Metro Bank about the online payments as the process was not simple.
22/34.2 Members were referred to Agenda item 7 (Minute F 22/36).
22/34.3 Cllr Mrs E Gadsdon had volunteered to assist with quarterly checks with Cllr M Strubel; Cllr Mrs L Dalby offered to assist should Members not be able to carry them out.
It was **resolved** that Members accepted the Action List update and agreed to the removal of closed items

F 22/35 Financial Report – February 2022:
The Clerk informed Members the salary increases had now been implemented.
There were no questions, and it was **resolved** that Members accepted the Financial Report.

F 22/36 Office Rent – response from Chair of Hawkwell Village Hall (HVH):
Members noted the response. The Clerk suggested a visit to the Essex Records Office to ascertain if there were any Minutes which referred to any historic agreement with the HVH. It was agreed that would be worth pursuing and the Clerk would aim to attend the offices in the summer; Cllrs Mrs L Dalby and R Gardner volunteered to accompany the Clerk should the Clerk need any assistance.
It was noted that the HVH had proposed an increase to £2k in their initial communications which represented an increase of 175%; the proposal had not included the electric costs which were covered by Council. Members questioned the costs of the electric and the Clerk informed Members the electricity contract was arranged by the HVH and that it was a fixed

contract. The Clerk estimated the cost for the electric for 2021-22 to be around £1k but Members suggested that could be double given the recent hike in electricity prices; the Clerk informed Members that payment was made in arrears.
A Member informed the Committee that another Parish Council had rented out their rooms and it was assumed this had spurred the HVH to address their rent agreement with HPC as the proposed costs were similar. Members discussed the issue of commercial rates and it was noted that Parish Councils should not pay commercial rents and that it was a community building. Members also discussed the office facilities and environment and felt that the office lacked certain basic facilities such as: clean single sex toilets; maintenance was required and there were noise level issues with the playgroup being next to the office.
It was **agreed** Members needed more time to investigate the matter and proposed that for 2022-23 the HVH be paid £1k for the office rent (40% increase), along with the electricity costs for 2021-22.

F 22/37 Review of Investment Strategy and Investment Activity December 2020 – March 2022: Parks:

Members noted the Clerk's report. The Clerk pointed out the Public Sector Deposit Fund (PSDF) had lost interest during the pandemic and that had fallen from £600 to £114 but that the interest received still exceed that of the Metro Bank Savings Account. The Clerk felt it was still the best option and Members agreed.
It was **resolved** that the Finance Committee review the investment Strategy and Investment Activity for 2021-22 and update section 8 accordingly. Members also confirmed the PSDF account still met Council's requirements and that the monthly yield continued to be reinvested into the PSDF.

F 22/38 Notification of completion of Q3 financial checks by Cllr M Strubel:

Members noted the information and that no issues had arisen. It was further noted the Q4 2021-22 checks would be carried out in April, post closedown.

F 22/39 Petty Cash:

The Clerk explained to Members that she had attempted to withdraw £100 for the petty cash from an ATM in the Co-op along Main Road, Hawkwell but that the money had not been dispensed. However, the amount had been taken from Council's Metro Bank Account. She had immediately sought help from the staff in the Co-op who had told her to contact the ATM company. Having contacted the ATM company she was then passed to Metro Bank who logged the issue and informed her the matter would be investigated. Members noted the letter which confirmed the matter was being investigated and that the Council's bank account would be credited with the missing £100 before the end of the month. The Clerk confirmed the money had yet to be returned but that she was regularly checking the account. It was noted the petty cash currently did not balance due to this issue.

F 22/40 Summary of Decisions:

- Members agreed to propose a rent increase to £1k to the HVH; the Clerk and Cllrs to visit the Records Office to see if there was a historical agreement in place.
- Investment Strategy & Investment Activity for Dec 2020-Mar 2022 reviewed.
- Petty cash issue ongoing; Members noted underbalance of £100 while matter is resolved.

The Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7:19pm

Chairman